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## CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC TRENDS IN PLATO <sup>1</sup>

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The problem of the One and the Many is a problem essentially Platonic. Characteristically Platonic is the saying of Socrates in the *Phaedrus*: "If I find any man who is able to see a 'One and Many' in nature, him I follow, and 'walk in his footsteps as if he were a god.'" <sup>2</sup> The problem of the One and the Many may indeed be said to be the point around which Plato's deepest concerns center. It occurs in most of his dialogues. It appears in different formulations, and it receives a variety of emphasis. It is certainly at the root of his morals. "Not life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued," <sup>3</sup> is Plato's fundamental teaching. And the good life is a life of law, order, justice. The diverse elements of the soul must be set in order; they must submit to one organizing principle; they must become a well-ordered unity. "Can there be any greater evil," asks Socrates, "than discord and distraction and plurality where unity ought to reign? or any greater good than the bond of unity?" <sup>4</sup> The ethical task of the many is "to grow up in a noble order"; <sup>5</sup> they must constitute "one entirely temperate

<sup>1</sup> An address before the Philosophical Union of the University of California, February 23, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedrus*, 266 (Jowett's translation).

<sup>3</sup> *Crito*, 48.

<sup>4</sup> *Republic*, 462.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 421.

and perfectly adjusted nature";<sup>6</sup> they must, like a work of art, become fashioned into "a regular and systematic whole."<sup>7</sup> The many are to become one, be the many the multiple elements of the individual soul or the plural citizens of the State. For Plato advocates no "double standard"—one for the individual and another for the group. "The just man," insists Socrates, "will be like the just State";<sup>8</sup> "the same principles which exist in the State exist also in the individual";<sup>9</sup> and "the States are as the men are."<sup>10</sup> This problem of the One and the Many is no mere ethical problem for Plato. His whole metaphysical quest is a quest for absolute essences behind the multiplicity of appearances. "Philosophers only are able," Socrates informs Glaucon, "to grasp the eternal and unchangeable, and those who wander in the region of the many and variable are not philosophers."<sup>11</sup> It is the task of philosophy to seek behind "the many and variable" for the absolute and eternal and immutable reality "not varying from generation and corruption." The doctrine of ideas, subject indeed to many and variable interpretations, must be regarded as Plato's metaphysical account of the nature of reality. "This universe," according to his belief, "is . . . Cosmos or order, not disorder or misrule."<sup>12</sup> That ultimate reality, despite appearances, possesses eternal harmony, absolute permanence, essential unity—this is the Platonic conviction formulated in the doctrine of ideas.

The search for unity then may in general be affirmed to be Plato's supreme speculative endeavor. What kind of unity is Plato seeking? Here we come upon a question which admits of no simple answer. I find in Plato two conflicting conceptions of unity. Whether they are with or without consistency maintained by him I am not prepared to discuss. To reconcile them, or to re-

<sup>6</sup> Republic, 443.<sup>7</sup> Gorgias, 504.<sup>8</sup> Republic, 435.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 441.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 544.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 484.<sup>12</sup> Gorgias, 508.

duce one to the other, is a task for the specialist who is committed to defend the unity of Plato's thought. I am no Plato scholar, and I have no ready hypothesis which will explain the differing modes of his doctrine. That the dialogues actually contain two inconsistent notions of unity, however the professional Platonist may interpret them, can be demonstrated by quotations from the text. Their inconsistency may indeed be superficial or even specious; nevertheless they seem to me to represent two fundamentally different attitudes toward life and reality. And because I think it important to note the distinction between them, I venture, with all due apologies to Plato and the Platonists, to call attention to these seemingly conflicting views.

One conception of unity found in Plato is a *unity which is antagonistic to the many*. Variety, difference, change, complexity are excluded from it. The immortality of the soul, for instance, is argued by Plato from such a notion of unity. "We cannot believe," asserts Socrates in the tenth Book of the *Republic* "—reason will not allow us— . . . the soul, in her truest nature, to be full of variety and difference and dissimilarity. . . . The soul . . . being . . . immortal, must be the fairest of compositions and cannot be compounded of many elements."<sup>13</sup> In the notion of *uncompounded unity* lies Plato's chief guarantee for the eternal existence of the soul. In the *Phaedo* Socrates formulates the argument thus: "The compound or composite may be supposed to be naturally capable, as of being compounded, so also of being dissolved; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble. . . . And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, whereas the compound is always changing and never the same."<sup>14</sup> And it is such argument which leads to the conclusion that "the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and

<sup>13</sup> *Republic*, 611.

<sup>14</sup> *Phaedo*, 78.

immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and unchangeable.”<sup>15</sup> Although this notion of the soul affords perhaps the most striking example of Plato’s view of an “uncompounded unity,” this same view is also at the basis of his doctrine of ideas. “Tell me,” Socrates asks of Meno, “tell me what virtue is in the universal; and do not make a singular into a plural, as the facetious say of those who break a thing, but deliver virtue to me whole and sound, and not broken into a number of pieces.”<sup>16</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and elsewhere the ideas are looked upon as being self-contained and transcending *internal* multiplicity and variety and change. What relation the ideas have to one another is a different question. But the ideas *quâ* ideas—the ideas of beauty, of justice, of goodness—are absolute and permanent, possessing a reality and dignity other than that of the flux of particulars. Socrates satirizes “the gentleman who is of opinion that there is no absolute or unchangeable idea of beauty—in whose opinion the beautiful is the manifold—he . . . your lover of beautiful sights, who cannot bear to be told that the beautiful is *one*, and the just is *one*, or that anything is *one*.”<sup>17</sup> The true lover of knowledge, on the contrary, “will not rest in the multiplicity of individuals which is an appearance only.”<sup>18</sup> But “those who see the many beautiful and . . . [not] absolute beauty . . . ; who see the many just and not absolute justice, and the like—such persons may be said to have opinion but not knowledge.”<sup>19</sup> I fully realize the danger which accrues from citing isolated passages of Plato’s dialogues, particularly those which concern the doctrine of ideas. The difficult questions which this doctrine raises lie indeed beyond the scope of an untechnical essay; the citations are justified, however, as merely illustrating one view of Platonic unity, a unity which is

<sup>15</sup> *Phaedo*, 80.<sup>16</sup> *Meno*, 77.<sup>17</sup> *Republic*, 479 (*italics mine*).<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 490.<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 479.

uncompounded and undifferentiated and thus opposed to multiplicity.

Contrasted with this is the other Platonic view of unity—*unity compounded of the many*. It is a unity which depends for its very existence and meaning upon multiplicity. The many bound together into a whole—organized, ordered, and harmonized—present a different sort of unity. It is a union of parts, not only admitting but demanding variety, difference, change, and complexity. The organization of life into such a well-ordered communion of parts is Plato's chief ethical task. As "the artist disposes all things in order, and compels the one part to harmonize and accord with the other part, until he has constructed a regular and systematic whole,"<sup>20</sup> so the just man will "look at the city which is within him, and take heed that no disorder occur in it."<sup>21</sup> Strangely at variance with Plato's account of the metaphysical soul as "uncompounded" and "uniform" is his view of the soul's multiplicity and variety essential for the moral life. The image of the soul as a triple animal whose different natures are to grow into one is indeed allegorical<sup>22</sup>; equally allegorical is the description of the soul under the figure of two winged horses and a charioteer<sup>23</sup>; but the reference to "the city which is within" man is not metaphorical. For the entire *Republic* is an exposition of the exact parallelism between the individual and the State. A miniature State is Plato's individual; a magnified individual his State. "In each of us," says Socrates, "there are the same principles and habits which there are in the State"<sup>24</sup>; "the just man . . . will be like the just State."<sup>25</sup> As the State is composed of three classes—justice consisting in their harmonious co-operation—so the individual soul possesses, corresponding to these classes, three principles—desire, passion, and reason, the

<sup>20</sup> Gorgias, 504.

<sup>21</sup> Republic, 492.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 588 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Phaedrus, 246 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Republic, 435.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

harmonious condition of which defines the just man.<sup>26</sup> In Socrates' own words: "For the just man does not permit the several elements within him to interfere with one another, or any of them to do the work of others; he sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself; and when he has bound together the three principles within him . . . [he] is no longer many, but has become one entirely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature."<sup>27</sup> The just soul is thus a united soul—an organic whole of differentiated, non-interchangeable, and interdependent parts. The same *organic unity*—on a larger scale—characterizes the just State. "Each individual," insists Socrates, "should be put to the use for which nature intended him, one to one work, and then every man would do his own business, *and be one and not many; and so the whole city would be one and not many.*"<sup>28</sup> In Plato's concept of the *well-ordered State* made up of various and distinct classes but "bound each to each in mutual piety," we have the harmonization of unity and plurality. The singleness of the State does not destroy, but on the contrary preserves, its multiplicity. The two concepts are here correlative. The many by retaining as individuals their distinct characters can become one and whole. "Citizens," exclaims Socrates in the parable of the metals, ". . . you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently."<sup>29</sup> That the individuals can achieve genuine individuality only by thus being distinct members of a whole is, of course, a much later thought, though implied in Plato's concept of the State. Whether Plato viewed the universe as having the character of a "well-ordered State" cannot here be asserted with confidence. The *Parmenides* may be quoted in support of this view. And not inimical to such an interpretation is the following

<sup>26</sup> Republic, 441 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 443.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 423 (*italics mine*).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 415.

passage from the *Gorgias*: "Philosophers tell us," Socrates mentions to Callicles, "that communion and friendship and orderliness and temperance and justice bind together heaven and earth and gods and men, and the universe is therefore called Cosmos or order, not disorder or misrule."<sup>30</sup>

Enough passages have now been quoted, I think, to suggest the nature of Plato's two concepts of unity—one in *essential opposition* to the many, and the other resulting from their *harmonious co-ordination*. I venture to apply the predicate "romantic" to Plato's search after a unity which transcends multiplicity, whereas his view of unity as exemplified in the conception of the "well-ordered State" I regard as "classic." My reason for employing these predicates in connection with Plato is twofold. In the first place, I wish to render the terms "classic" and "romantic"—as far as possible within the limits of this address—philosophically articulate, and thus contribute something toward their rescue from the vagueness and triviality which they have acquired as exclusively literary categories. And in the next place, I find that the romanticists in literature—particularly the German romanticists—share many paradoxical features with Plato, these features in the case of both resulting from an essential clash between the one and the many, between the universal and the particular.<sup>31</sup>

It is the search for a transcendent unity and harmony which leads the "romantic" Plato to invest the multi-

<sup>30</sup> *Gorgias*, 508.

<sup>31</sup> I refer here mainly to German romanticists because it was they—particularly Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829)—who clearly formulated a theory of romanticism which they sought to carry out both in life and in art. The group comprising the "Romantic School" consisted of Friedrich von Hardenberg (called Novalis), the two Schlegels—August and his brother Friedrich—and Ludwig Tieck; but I have in mind their later followers as well, such as Brentano, Arnim, von Kleist, Fouqué, Hoffmann, Chamisso, Eichendorff, Heine. I do not think, however, that there is an essential difference between the romanticism in Germany and what is vaguely enough called by the same name in the literatures of other countries. For the romantic tendencies alluded to in this essay it will not be difficult, therefore, to find illustrations in general European literature.



plicity of the world with a negative character. Speaking broadly, the manifold existences of life when contrasted with the unity of Plato's ideal realm become for him either *grotesque* or *symbolic*. By grotesque I mean to denote his notion of the world of particulars as distorted, meaningless, unreal; by symbolic his other notion that the same world of particulars may yet be viewed by the philosopher as a suggestion or hint or intimation of a transcendent realm of universals. In the words of Pindar: "Things of a day, what are we and what are we not? The dream of a shadow is humankind; yet when a god-given splendor falls, light shines radiant upon men and life is sweet."<sup>32</sup> Grotesque is the world as portrayed in the parable of the den in the seventh Book of the *Republic*. Living in an underground cave, with their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move toward the light which is above and behind them and are therefore doomed to mistake for realities the shadowy images on the screen in front of them—such is the existence of those in the "region of the many and variable." This grotesque world of images or "the shadows of images"<sup>33</sup> is contrasted by Plato with the "upper world" which is revealed to the "mind's eye" of the philosopher. Equally grotesque is the situation of the soul "fastened and glued to the body," as depicted in the *Phaedo*.<sup>34</sup> Philosophy, Socrates tells us, consists in "the study of death"—death to all that which is "of the human and mortal and unintellectual and multiform and dissoluble and changeable."<sup>35</sup> The disciple of philosophy, however, can, according to Plato, overcome the visible and discordant world in yet another way. It is by viewing it as a *sign* or *symbol* of a different

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by J. W. Mackail: *Lectures on Greek Poetry*, London, 1910, p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> *Republic*, 517.

<sup>34</sup> *Phaedo*, 79 ff.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 80. This notion of "death" occurs in Novalis. Indeed he made a "resolution" thus to die. And in a letter to Friedrich Schlegel (January 20, 1799) he speaks of the longing of Christianity as "absolute Abstraktion, Annihilation des Jetztigen, Apotheose der Zukunft—dieser eigentlichen bessern Welt."

realm. Appearances, apparitions, shadows, ghosts—the “many”—are when taken by themselves weird, grotesque, bizarre; interpreted, however, as suggestions of a reality other and deeper than themselves they become instinct with spiritual significance. It is the particular *as* particular which is unspiritual, sordid, corrupt; as sign or medium of a universal nature it is raised to a different level. Thus Plato’s doctrine of love may be interpreted. The ideal of love, revealed by Diotima in the *Symposium*, is to attain true beauty, “the divine beauty, . . . pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life.”<sup>36</sup> But this is the *ideal* goal. As aids to its attainment the earthly beauties themselves, though “clogged with the pollutions of mortality,” become spiritualized. I quote Diotima’s words: “The true order of going . . . to the things of love is to begin from the beauties of the earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is.”<sup>37</sup> The discussion in the *Phaedrus* whether the non-lover or the lover is to be preferred revolves around the same distinction between false love and true love. Grotesque is the notion of love which is not “the love of immortality,”<sup>38</sup> “taken from some haunt of sailors,”<sup>39</sup> whereas true love is symbolic, i.e., beauty of bodily form is to be loved as an intimation and expression of divine beauty.<sup>40</sup> “Sight is the most piercing of our bodily

<sup>36</sup> *Symposium*, 211.<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 211.<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 207.<sup>39</sup> *Phaedrus*, 243.

<sup>40</sup> This doctrine of “symbolic love” is one of the cardinal teachings of German romanticism. It has received a variety of expression. The attitude of the lover toward the beloved in Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lucinde* is typical. Says *Lucinde*’s lover: “*Lass mich’s bekennen, ich liebe nicht dich allein, ich liebe die Weiblichkeit selbst. Ich liebe sie nicht bloss, ich bete sie an, weil ich die Menschheit anbete.*” (Edition 1799, p. 70.)

senses," says Socrates, "though not by that is wisdom seen; her loveliness would have been transporting if there had been a visible image of her, and the other ideas, if they had visible counterparts, would be equally lovely. But this is the privilege of beauty, that being the loveliest she is also the most palpable to sight. . . . He . . . who has been the spectator of many glories in the other world, is amazed when he sees any one having a godlike face or any bodily form which is the expression of divine beauty . . . ; looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god he reverences him, and if he were not afraid of being thought a downright madman, he would sacrifice to his beloved as to the image of a god."<sup>41</sup> In the seventh Book of the *Republic* a similar contrast is brought out between the objects of sense and the objects of science. The study of astronomy, for instance, when its objects are the mere visible and perishable stars, is rebuked by Socrates. Thus: "That knowledge only which is of being and of the unseen can make the soul look upwards, and whether a man gapes at the heavens or blinks on the ground, seeking to learn some particular of sense, I would deny that he can learn, for nothing of that sort is matter of science; his soul is looking downwards, not upwards, whether his way to knowledge is by water or by land, whether he floats or only lies on his back."<sup>42</sup> Arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and the kindred sciences of relations and order have for Plato educational value because they are suggestive or symbolic of the ideal world. They tend "to make more easy the vision of the idea of good."<sup>43</sup>

Many more passages could be cited to show that the "region of the many and variable" is viewed by Plato now as grotesque or unreal or impure, now as symbolic or suggestive or representative of the absolute and permanent "upper world." What I wish to emphasize, how-

<sup>41</sup> Phaedrus, 250-251.

<sup>42</sup> Republic, 529.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 526.

ever, is this—the clash between unity and multiplicity, between the ideal and the real, with the consequent transformation of the latter into the grotesque or the symbolic is the very *differentia* of romanticism. The pendular oscillation between the grotesque and the symbolic—between regarding the particulars of the world now as illusory, now as intimations of the infinite—appears to be at the root of most of the romantic paradoxes. It is this oscillation which renders intelligible the union of so many contradictory traits found in both the life and the art of romanticists. Cynicism and reverence; self-parody and self-worship; self-concentration and self-expansion; individualism and cosmopolitanism; loyalty and infidelity; dreamful ease and prodigious activity; superficiality and profundity—these are but a few romantic tendencies having their source in the Platonic longing for an ideal world opposed to the actual.<sup>44</sup>

The romanticists are adept specialists in the art of the grotesque. I need but allude to the tales of Novalis, Tieck, Chamisso, Hoffmann, Victor Hugo, Poe. With the German romanticists, however, the cultivation of the grotesque is a conscious design to destroy the common conceptions of things. It is a quasi-Socratic *reductio ad absurdum* of the generally accepted world. For the romanticists the world is full of wonder and mystery undreamt of by the “many,” the philistines. But this wonder and mystery, because so obvious to them, lose their strangeness. Hence the reverse romantic tendency to depict the miraculous and the fabulous as the familiar. The romantic world is veritably *verkehrt*. The familiar becomes strange, the strange familiar; the near grows far, the far near. It is to this spirit that we owe a wealth

<sup>44</sup> I should not be understood as deriving romanticism historically from Plato. I am well aware, in the case of German romanticism, of the intimate relation between it and the Fichtean philosophy. I am using romanticism here as an elemental attitude possessing philosophic generality, of which the Fichtean doctrine of the world-building and world-destroying Infinite Self, engaged in the restless quest after an unattainable ideal, is itself a notable expression.

of modern fairy tales and an appreciative interest in distant languages and literatures.

His longing for an ideal harmonious world determines the romanticist's strange theory of values. The worth of things resides in the moods they arouse, the dreams they inspire, the hidden realities they suggest.

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,"

says Wordsworth at the close of his Ode on *Immortality*. Or in the words of another poet,

"Not the slightest leaf but trembling teems  
With golden visions and romantic dreams."

Contrasted with the ideal, all particular things and interests are equally nugatory; as suggestions or symbols of the ideal everything is equally relevant. This double standard applied to *all* things, at once or successively, is typically romantic. It engenders an elasticity of mood and feeling and thought and expression which is consistent in its capriciousness. Loyalty to the ideal requires a constant flux of symbols. In order not to become enmeshed in particulars the romanticist must continually transcend them. So it comes about that for him loyalty and infidelity are Siamese twins. Loyalty to the universal is conditioned upon faithlessness to the particulars. The symbolic character of the particular can be demonstrated only by forsaking and exchanging it for another particular. The romanticist may therefore be called an intellectual and emotional "polygamist." In love with the infinite, no finite aim, interest, mood, or person can lay claim to his sustained fidelity. Because his allegiance belongs to the eternal he must perforce repudiate temporary and transient embodiments of it.

"No more of me ye knew,  
My Love!  
No more of me ye knew,"

is the "rover's adieu" to his fugitive attachments. Paradoxical though it may seem, fickleness is the very expression of his constancy. Don Juan is the romanticist's most faithful lover.

Thus in search for unity and harmony the romanticist becomes a wanderer from particular to particular. *Wanderlust*—the universal romantic *motif*—acquires for him the dignity of a philosophic principle. Aimlessness, exemplified, for instance, in Eichendorff's *Das Leben eines Taugenichts*, is his conscious aim, and is extended as a programme to all intellectual, emotional, and imaginative pursuits. The acquisition of a definite and particular purpose is accompanied with the ache of self-limitation, and calls therefore for relief through the cultivation of new interests. For particular ends and purposes are but transient means to appease one's yearning after the infinite. Care must be taken to discover constantly new means. The frequent abandonment of particular interests is the romanticist's sincere proof that his goal is the universal, not the particular. Hence his protean activity, his catholicity, his versatility. His is the life of the adventurous wanderer. He roams through field and forest, art and religion, philosophy and science, life and love, with the *élan vital* of Shelley's *West Wind*. He heeds not the call,

"Wild Spirit which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!"

Of necessity then his nature must be untamed and undisciplined. Discipline and waywardness do not dwell within the same breast. In this the romanticist glories. The wanderer's life alone is the free life. The freedom romanticism eulogizes is the *freedom from particularity*. Stoicism too advocates such freedom. But there is a radical difference between the two. Stoicism wins its independence by withdrawing from the particulars; roman-

ticism by pursuing and appropriating *all* possible particulars. The stoic turns his back upon the vicissitudes and complexities of life; the romanticist experiments and plays with them. The freedom from particulars, from their ties and responsibilities which the player and the wanderer alone enjoy, is the romantic ideal. Viewing thus all things through the eyes of the passing pilgrim, the romanticist can give you no definite picture of what he sees. He can but give you his fugitive and sensitive impressions. For this reason all romantic art has a lyrical quality about it. It is an art of suggestion and mood. It is what the Germans call *stimmungsvoll*. And no accident is it that romantic art excels in the epigram, the fragment, the lyric, the essay, the tale, the song, and all the other casual forms of expression. Romantic achievement is the achievement which requires no sustained effort, no prolonged attention, being the product of the moment's mood and inspiration. Thoroughly at home the German romanticists—so protean in their interests and so prodigious in their industry—were in no one field. They paid the price of the rover's life. The pathos of the wanderer's homelessness none felt more keenly than they. In endless pursuit of their ideal, seeking and finding no particular object which will embody it, doomed therefore to aimless and restless straying, the romanticists have repeatedly given voice to the thought,

“We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not.”

The romantic fate has perhaps been most pointedly stated by the author of the *Imitation of Christ*. Thus: “Thou hast no dwelling city and wherever thou be thou art as a stranger and a pilgrim.” You will also recall the lamentation of Schubert's *Wanderer*: “*Dort wo Du nicht bist, da ist das Glück.*”

Consistent with his theory of values is the romanticist's attitude toward himself. As "destroyer" and "preserver" he ranges and strays among the experiences of his inner life which can afford him a resting place as little as the world outside him. Here again he is a stranger and a pilgrim. At once "grotesque" and "symbolic," distorted and clear, worthless and profound, ephemeral and infinite his passions and thoughts and moods appear to him.<sup>45</sup> As particular among particulars he is himself something to be estranged from and forsaken. But like all things finite, he also

"Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar."

He is not only finite; he too is an intimation of the infinite. Thus the dramatic oscillation between the grotesque and the symbolic is projected into the romanticist's inner life. In his exalted moods he regards himself as God's beloved, as the inspired vehicle of the Eternal. Hence his genuine love and reverence for himself. His dreams, his words, his tears, are instinct with universal meaning; he bares them as revelations of a nature deeper and vaster than his own; they have for him the awesome significance of oracular signs. Thus sings Emerson:

"I am owner of the sphere,  
Of the seven stars and the solar year,  
Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain,  
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain."

<sup>45</sup> This is a familiar paradox in romantic literature. Goethe's *Faust* complains:

"Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust;  
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;  
Die eine hält in derber Liebeslust,  
Sich an die Welt, mit klammernden Organen;  
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust  
Zu den Gefühlen hoher Ahnen."

And Victor Hugo's *Mahomet* laments:

"Je suis le lieu vil des sublimes combats:  
Tantôt l'homme d'en haut, et tantôt l'homme d'en bas;  
Et le mal dans ma bouche avec le bien alterne,  
Comme dans le désert le sable et la citerne."



But—and here is the romantic paradox—because he is a symbol of the divine, because he worships the ideal within him, he must burst the bonds of his own particularity, he must not be smothered in the flux of his inner life. The deep love of the universal of which he is a medium leads him to absolve himself from himself, not indeed in the stoic's or in the mystic's fashion. The romantic way is the cynical way. Self-parody is the romanticist's mode of purging himself of his particularity. Cynical self-contemplation is the "destroyer" of his ephemeral and the "preserver" of his eternal nature. Cynicism toward himself becomes his sublimest expression of reverence for the universal, just as his deliberate infidelity to definite ends was the very instrumentality by which the romanticist could show his supreme allegiance and longing for the infinite. Self-parody is thus seen to be a method of solving the Platonic problem of the universal and the particular.

Viewed thus, the principle of "romantic irony," formulated by Friedrich Schlegel with especial reference to the artist's attitude toward his work, is simply another aspect of romantic freedom from particularity. It is, to borrow a phrase from Walter Pater, the "fastidious refusal to be or do any limited thing." The romanticist refuses to identify himself with his work because, being particular, it never can be an adequate expression of his infinite ambition. For the romantic ideal is the universal—Schlegel's *Universalpoesie*; as such it can achieve no realization in any *particular* content and form. The artist's love for art is to be measured by his ability to transcend his own product. Freedom and independence of his own particular efforts are demonstrated by his willingness ever to repudiate them. The test of his earnestness is self-irony. Irony is his explicit acknowledgment that the ideal is more precious than the actual. Irony toward his work is simply the disavowal of the particular-

ity which attaches to it in favor of the universal essence of which it is to be an intimation. With the various ways in which this principle of irony has been applied, notably by Tieck and Byron and Heine, and more recently by Shaw, we are here not concerned.

These are but a few romantic trends and paradoxes which have their *logical* source in the Platonic longing for an ideal and harmony transcending this world of the "many and variable." In his *Lucinde*—a book which contains in a nutshell the entire philosophy of romanticism, theoretical and applied—Friedrich Schlegel characterizes the object of romantic longing as longing itself. And Novalis has supplied the symbol for this notion in his well-known figure of the "blue flower." The concept "longing for longing" is typically Platonic. Longing as such, by being its own object and devoid of definite content, becomes a sort of "colourless, formless, intangible essence,"<sup>46</sup> which can find embodiment or rest in no particular nature. More than a superficial resemblance has this idea of longing to Schopenhauer's notion of the "will," but what interests us here is the Platonic dualism of the universal and the particular implied in it. Infinite longing and the many and the particular objects of longing cannot coalesce; for ever sundered they must remain, since the only *definite* thing which longing seeks is *indefinite* longing itself. It is this yearning after itself—a transcendent thing—which sends the romanticist a-roving. It is this which constitutes the romantic career—

"To burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,  
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day."

It is this which explains his eternal *Wanderlust* among all experience, among all the objects of nature and life, of love and art.

While the romanticist's longing can never come to rest, it seems to find a momentary haven of refuge in the

<sup>46</sup> Phaedrus, 247.

contemplation of the past. The modern historic spirit, inaugurated by the German romanticists, is intimately bound up with romantic longing. Their interest in the past springs from the feeling that the harmony and unity longed for had once been realized, had had embodiment in epochs remote from the present. The historic spirit of romanticism consists in a conscious reconstruction of the past in terms of an ideal vainly sought for here and now.<sup>47</sup> Thus the past becomes idealized. And thus commences the romantic *regressive* pilgrimage. The Middle Ages, Hellas, or perchance a more antique Golden Age, are endowed with the heaven of beauty and harmony and perfection. The isles of Greece become romantic Arcadia; and the unmatched glories and splendors of mediæval life, art, and religion were not seen until discovered, loved, and cherished by romantic poets. This idealization of the remote past, and the motives for it, the romanticists share with Plato. In Plato also may be found the projection into antiquity—a very *remote* antiquity in his case—of an ideal and perfection “not varying from generation and corruption.” The Platonic theory of “recollection” is based upon the assumption of a previous existence more perfect than the present. All knowing, all learning is but recalling what the soul beheld in that perfect state. “The Soul,” Socrates states in the *Meno*, “. . . being immortal, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all; and it is no wonder that she should be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew . . .; the soul has learned all things, there is no difficulty in her eliciting, or as men say learning, out of a single recollection all the rest . . .; for all enquiry and all learning is

<sup>47</sup> The historic spirit of romanticism should not be confused with that of Hegel. In general, the romanticists emphasize the discontinuity of past and present, exemplified in *Die Christenheit oder Europa* by Novalis, in *Atala* by Chateaubriand, in Rousseau's works; whereas Hegel insists upon their continuity. The romanticists look backward for an ideal in contrast with the actual; Hegel looks to the past for the seeds of the full-grown present.

but recollection.”<sup>48</sup> The *Phaedrus* likewise goes back to a former state of existence, in which the gods and men have once seen the divine forms of “justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute.”<sup>49</sup> Plato’s “golden age” is depicted more vividly and more poetically in the following passage: “There was a time when . . . we beheld the beatific vision and were initiated into a mystery which may be truly called most blessed, celebrated by us in our state of innocence, before we had any experience of evils to come, when we were admitted to the sight of apparitions innocent and simple and calm and happy, which we beheld shining in pure light, pure ourselves and not yet enshrined in that living tomb which we carry about, now that we are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in his shell.”<sup>50</sup> This “historic” spirit of Plato, this looking “backward” to a blessed “state of innocence” is born of the same yearning as that of the romanticists, the yearning to find in a “previous” existence unity, harmony, perfection, and an escape from the present strife of the one and the many, the universal and the particular.

The “classic” trend of Plato remains now to be briefly suggested. Whereas his romanticism lies in the clash between unity and multiplicity and in the consequent transformation of the latter into the grotesque or the symbolic, the ideal which dominates his classicism consists in the reconciliation of the one and the many, the universal and the particular. In his “well-ordered State” Plato has defined for us a novel concept of unity—a unity which logically requires multiplicity. It is the unity of a *whole* which results from the organization and co-ordination of the many. Here diverse elements are welded together into an harmonious structure. Here we have a

<sup>48</sup> *Meno*, 81.<sup>49</sup> *Phaedrus*, 247.<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 250.

unity which is compounded of the many. Here the particulars constitute a universal. These particulars—the many elements of the State—are not ephemeral shadows or faint copies of a transcendent universal; they are real and necessary and constitutive parts of a whole. Thus, universal and particular, whole and part, unity and multiplicity are interdependent and mutually inclusive. The problem of monism and pluralism—to use metaphysical concepts—receives here perhaps its only adequate solution. Unity without multiplicity is “empty”; multiplicity without unity “blind.” Plato’s State illustrates a multiplicity which is an organic unity, a unity which is a well-ordered multiplicity.

The parts which constitute such an organic union, however, cannot be equal. The State is a whole which is no mere sum of external parts; its wholeness is achieved through differentiation. That is, the particulars which enter into such union must be *different* particulars; otherwise we should have a blurred and not a well-ordered whole. One particular member of the State, for instance, cannot be allowed to usurp the function of another particular. Each has in the structure of the whole a unique and distinct place. “In all well-ordered States,” says Socrates in the *Republic*, “every individual has an occupation to which he must attend.”<sup>51</sup> Also, “Each individual should be put to the use for which nature intended him.”<sup>52</sup> Justice of the State as well as of the individual resides for Plato in the harmonious co-operation of *distinct* interests and activities. The just soul is the well-ordered soul; the just State is the well-ordered State. Well-ordered organizations then are unities which are composed of a plurality of distinct parts. The wholeness of any organism is secured, preserved, and rendered effective by the very particularization and specialization of its members. Thus not escape from particularity, as

<sup>51</sup> *Republic*, 406.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 423.

demanding by romanticism, but loyalty to the special rôle which the whole assigns to each of its members is the classic ideal. Not freedom from particularity—the romantic ambition—but freedom to be a particular, to have a definite place in the organic composition of the whole is the classic aim.

To exhibit in detail that the Platonic notion of “organic unity” or “organic wholeness” is at the basis of the classic theory of art lies beyond the province of this paper. I hope I shall be pardoned, however, for citing in this connection a lengthy but significant passage from S. H. Butcher.

“It may be noticed,” says he, commenting on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, “that the opposition between the poet and the historian in the *Poetics* is incidentally introduced to illustrate the sense in which a tragedy is one and a whole. These two notions as understood by Aristotle are not identical. A unity is composed of a plurality of parts which cohere together and fall under a common idea but are not necessarily combined in a definite order. The notion of a whole implies something more. The parts which constitute it must be inwardly connected, arranged in a certain order, structurally related, and combined into a system. A whole is not a mere mass or sum of external parts which may be transposed at will, any one of which may be omitted without perceptibly affecting the rest. It is a unity which is unfolded and expanded according to the law of its own nature, an organism which develops from within. By the rule, again, of beauty, which is a first requirement of art, a poetic creation must exhibit at once unity and plurality. . . . The idea of an organism evidently underlies all Aristotle’s rules about unity; it is tacitly assumed as a first principle of art, and in one passage is expressly mentioned as that from which the rule of epic unity is deduced. ‘The plot must, as in a tragedy, be dramatically constructed; it must have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. *It will thus resemble a single and coherent organism*, and produce the pleasure proper to it.’

“Plato in the *Phaedrus* had insisted that every artistic composition, whether in prose or verse, should have an organic unity. ‘You will allow that every discourse ought to be constructed like a living organism, having its own body and head and feet; it must have middle and extremities, drawn in a manner agreeable to one another and to the

whole.' Aristotle took up the hint; the passage above quoted from the *Poetics* is a remarkable echo of the words of the *Phaedrus*; and indeed the idea may be said to be at the basis of his whole poetic criticism."<sup>53</sup>

There is no need to show in this essay how the Platonic ideal of a well-ordered whole dominates the practice of Greek art as well as its theory. This ideal it is which furnishes a standard of character and life associated with "the glory that was Greece." A criterion of conduct as well as of taste is supplied by it. The harmony and coherence and repose of classic art, the felicity and beauty and restraint of classic life, are grounded in the Platonic conception of "organic unity." And this conception, in both its aesthetic and moral excellence, is the model of modern classicism. French literature in the seventeenth century is classic in this sense. And the same classic ideal inspires the mature poetry of Goethe and of Schiller. It is the Platonic view of a well-ordered and harmonious whole which defines, for instance, in *Wilhelm Meister* and in *Iphigenie* Goethe's standard of conduct and of art.

I am convinced that an analysis more exhaustive than here attempted of Plato's two concepts of unity would yield a logical basis for defining most of the problems connected with classicism and romanticism both in art and in philosophy. Here I could do no more than suggest that the distinction between the classic and the romantic ideals is fundamental and intimately related to the Platonic teachings. Whether Plato was essentially a classicist or essentially a romanticist, or both in strange union, I do not know. I must reiterate, as I close, that I venture upon no interpretation of Plato himself. However the classic and the romantic trends in his writings be explained, the distinction between them is important. For here, to speak with Socrates, "no light matter is at stake, nothing less than the rule of human life."

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle's *Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts*, Fourth Edition, Macmillan Co. London, 1911, pp. 186-189.